DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 415 325 UD 032 107

AUTHOR Lyman, Isabel
TITLE Homeschooling. Back to the Future? Policy Analysis No. 294.
INSTITUTION Cato Inst., Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 1998-01-07
NOTE 21p.
AVAILABLE FROM Cato Institute, 1000 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20001 ($6; $3 each for 5 or more copies); phone: 202-842-0200; fax: 202-842-3490; http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-294es.html
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Civil Liberties; Cost Effectiveness; Court Litigation; Elementary Secondary Education; Government Role; *Home Schooling; Instructional Effectiveness; *Nontraditional Education; Parent Student Relationship; *Parents as Teachers; *School Attendance Legislation
IDENTIFIERS *Religious Right

ABSTRACT

Dissatisfied with the performance of government-run schools, more and more American families have begun teaching their children at home. Estimates of the number of homeschooled children vary widely; the best estimate is 500,000 to 750,000, but some estimates range up to 1.23 million. All observers agree that the number has grown rapidly over the past 15 years. There are two historical strains of homeschooling, a religious-right thread inspired by author Raymond Moore and a countercultural-left thread inspired by John Holt. Their differences illustrate the various concerns that cause people to choose homeschooling: some want religious values in education, some worry about the crime and lack of discipline in the government schools, others are concerned with the declining quality of education, and still others just feel that children are best educated by their parents. A recent boom in the number of homeschooled students winning admission to selective colleges demonstrates both the growth and the effectiveness of homeschooling. The lesson for educational reformers is that homeschooling, with minimal government interference, has produced literate students at a fraction of the cost of any government program. Homeschooling has been largely deregulated, but further deregulation would make parents' task easier. Contains 62 endnotes. (Author/SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Policy Analysis

No. 294 January 7, 1998

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

G. F. Taylor
Cato Institute

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

ED 415 325

HOMESCHOOLING

Back to the Future?

BY ISABEL LYMAN

Executive Summary

The victory of homeschooled 13-year-old Rebecca Sealfon in the 1997 National Spelling Bee brought new attention to the growing phenomenon of homeschooling. Dissatisfied with the performance of government-run schools, more and more American families have begun teaching their children at home. Estimates of the number of homeschooled children vary widely; the best estimate is 500,000 to 750,000, but some estimates range up to 1.23 million. All observers agree that the number has grown rapidly over the past 15 years.

There are two historical strains of homeschooling, a religious-right thread inspired by author Raymond Moore and a countercultural-left thread inspired by John Holt. Their differences illustrate the various concerns that cause people to choose homeschooling: some want religious values in education, some worry about the crime and lack of discipline in the government schools, some object to the conformity and bureaucracy in the schools, others are concerned with the declining quality of education, and still others just feel that children are best educated by their parents.

A recent boom in the number of homeschooled students winning admission to selective colleges demonstrates both the growth and the effectiveness of homeschooling. The lesson for educational reformers is that homeschooling, with minimal government interference, has produced literate students at a fraction of the cost of any government program. Homeschooling has been largely deregulated, but further deregulation would make parents' task easier.

Isabel Lyman is codirector of Harkness Road High School in Amherst, Massachusetts, and a long-time homeschooling parent.

UD032107

CATO INSTITUTE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Introduction

Thirteen-year-old Rebecca Sealfon of Brooklyn, New York, brought new attention to the growing phenomenon of homeschooling when she became the first homeschooled child to win the National Spelling Bee. She was one of 17 homeschooled students among 245 competitors in the 70th annual bee, held in May 1997.[1]

The rise of homeschooling, of course, reflects broadening dissatisfaction with formal education in the United States. From its modest beginnings in one-room schoolhouses, American education has grown into a gargantuan government enterprise. Today, about 50 million students attend more than 85,000 public schools and more than 26,000 private schools.[2] Education is the largest line item in most state budgets. The average per pupil expenditure in America's public schools is $6,993.[3]

Ironically, given the amount of money expended on teaching young people, public dissatisfaction with America's schools is high. In a Gallup Poll, "The Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools," 45 percent of the respondents gave America's schools low grades--C, D, or F.[4]

Dissatisfaction is high for two reasons. First, American public schools are turning out a poor product--illiterate and unprepared graduates. For example, American 13-year-olds have been documented as having math skills that rank below those of 13-year-olds in 14 other developed countries.[5] One survey noted that only one in three high school juniors could place the Civil War in the right half century.[6] Not coincidentally, American companies are spending billions of dollars a year on remedial education for their employees.[7]

Equally troubling, public schools have become crime scenes where drugs are sold, teachers are robbed, and homemade bombs are found in lockers. A Metropolitan Life study released in 1993 reported that over 10 percent of teachers and 25 percent of students had been victims of violence at or near their public schools.[8]

To compound the problem, teachers' unions, school officials, and many politicians adamantly oppose the use of public monies for innovative solutions, such as vouchers and charter schools. Those alternatives, although not a panacea for all the present problems, are at least promising vehicles that could help poor and middle-income parents to find

better schools for their children and break up the monopoly of a "one-size-fits-all" philosophy of education.

In light of the educational quagmire the United States finds itself in toward the end of the 20th century, many parents, impatient for reform, are taking matters into their own hands. One alternative that is gaining growing public acceptance is the educational option known as homeschooling.

What Homeschooling Is

Homeschooling is defined simply as the "education of school-aged children at home rather than at a school."[9] Homeschools, according to those who have observed or created them, are as diverse as the individuals who choose that educational method.

> They [homeschools] range from the highly structured to the structured to the unstructured, from those which use the approaches of conventional schools to those which are repulsed by conventional practice, and from the homeschool that follows homemade materials and plans to the one that consumes hundreds of dollars worth of commercial curriculum materials per year.[10]

Homeschoolers like to say that the world is their classroom. Or, as John Lyon, writing for the Rockford Institute, has observed,

> Schooling, rather obviously, is what goes on in schools; education takes place wherever and whenever the nature with which we are born is nurtured so as to draw out of those capacities which conduce to true humanity. The home, the church, the neighborhood, the peer group, the media, the shopping mall . . . are all educational institutions.[11]

Modern learning theories aside, homeschoolers believe that the student who receives his instruction simultaneously from the home and the community at large will be a more culturally sophisticated child than the one the bulk of whose learning experiences is confined to a school. The historical record offers noteworthy examples of the "world is my teacher" model. Woodrow Wilson, Thomas Edison, Andrew Wyeth, Pearl Buck, and the Founding Fathers were all taught at home. Those famous Americans' parents were pioneers.

The Origins of Homeschooling: Raymond Moore

The seeds of what has grown into the modern-day American homeschooling movement were planted by two unrelated individuals about 30 years ago. In 1969 Raymond Moore, a former U.S. Department of Education employee, laid the groundwork that would legitimatize homeschooling as one of the great, populist educational movements of the 20th century.

Moore, who holds an Ed.D. from the University of Southern California, along with his wife, Dorothy, a reading specialist and former Los Angeles County elementary school teacher, initiated an inquiry into previously neglected areas of educational research. Two of the questions the Moores and a team of like-minded colleagues set out to answer were, Is institutionalizing young children a sound, educational trend, and what is the best timing for school entrance?[12]

They sought advice from over 100 family development specialists and researchers, including Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University, John Bowlby of the World Health Organization, and Burton White of Harvard University. Those professionals recommended "a cautious approach to subjecting [the child's] developing nervous system and mind to formal constraints."[13] Psychologist Bronfenbrenner maintained that subjecting children to the daily routine of elementary school can result in excessive dependence on peers.[14]

In the process of analyzing thousands of studies, 20 of which compared early school entrants with late starters, the Moores began to conclude that development problems, such as hyperactivity, nearsightedness, and dyslexia, were often the result of prematurely taxing a child's nervous system and mind with continuous academic tasks, like reading and writing.

The bulk of the research, which overwhelmingly supported distancing young children from daily contact with institutionalized settings, convinced the Moores that formal schooling should be delayed until at least age 8 or 10, or even as late as 12. Raymond Moore explained the upshot of his research, stating, "These findings sparked our concern and convinced us to focus our investigation on two primary areas: formal learning and socializing. Eventually, this work led to an unexpected interest in homeschools."[15]

The Moores went on to write Home Grown Kids and Home-Spun Schools, which were published in the 1980s. The books,

which are written from a Christian perspective but offer a universal message for all interested parties, have sold hundreds of thousands of copies and offer practical advice to parents on how to succeed as home educators. The Moores advocate a firm but gentle approach to home education that balances study, chores, and work outside the home in an atmosphere geared toward a child's particular developmental needs.

The Influence of John Holt

During the 1960s and early 1970s, another voice emerged in the public school debate, a voice for decentralizing schools and returning greater autonomy to teachers and parents. John Holt, an Ivy League graduate and a teacher in alternative schools, was decrying the lack of humanity toward schoolchildren, even in the most compassionate school settings. Holt was also a critic of the compulsory nature of schooling. He wrote,

> To return once more to compulsory school in its barest form, you will surely agree that if the government told you that on one hundred and eighty days of the year, for six or more hours a day, you had to be at a particular place, and there do whatever people told you to do, you would feel that this was a gross violation of your civil liberties.[16]

Holt, who had long advocated the reform of schools, became increasingly frustrated that so few parents were willing to work toward change within the system. Consequently, after his own years as a classroom teacher, he observed that well-meaning but overworked teachers, who program children to recite right answers and discourage self-directed learning, often retard children's natural curiosity. He chronicled his litany of complaints in How Children Fail.[17]

Holt came to view schools as places that produce obedient, but bland, citizens. He saw the child's daily grind of attending school as preparation for the future adult grind of paying confiscatory taxes and subservience to authority figures. Holt even compared the dreariness of the school day to the experience of having a "full-time painful job."[18] Ultimately, Holt concluded that the most humane way to educate a child was to homeschool him.

To disseminate his views, in 1977 Holt founded Growing without Schooling, a bimonthly magazine about and for individuals who had removed their children from school. The magazine became a tool that allowed home educators, particularly those who might be described as the "libertarian left," an opportunity to network and exchange "war stories."

In summary, Holt espoused a philosophy that could be considered a laissez faire approach to home-based education or, as he called it, "learning by living." It is a philosophy that Holt's followers have come to describe as "unschooling."

> What is most important and valuable about the home as a base for children's growth into the world is not that it is a better school than the schools but that it isn't school at all. It is not an artificial place, set up to make "learning" happen and in which nothing except "learning" ever happens. It is a natural, organic, central, fundamental human institution, one might easily and rightly say the foundation of all other human institutions.[19]

The constituencies Raymond Moore and Holt individually attracted reflected the backgrounds and lifestyles of the two researchers. Moore, a former Christian missionary, earned a sizable (but hardly an exclusive) following among parents who chose homeschooling primarily to impart traditional religious mores to their children--the Christian right. Holt, a humanist, became a cult figure of sorts to the wing of the homeschooling movement that drew together New Age devotees, ex-hippies, and homesteaders--the countercultural left.

The two men earned national reputations as educational pioneers, working independently of one another, eloquently addressing the angst that a diverse body of Americans felt about the modern-day educational system--a system that seemed to exist to further the careers of educational elites instead of one that served the developmental needs of impressionable children. In the 1970s the countercultural left, who responded more strongly to Holt's cri de coeur, comprised the bulk of homeschooling families. By the mid-1980s, however, the religious right would be the most dominant group to choose homeschooling and would change the nature of homeschooling from a crusade against "the establishment" to a crusade against the secular forces of modern-day society.

Buttressed by their national media appearances, legislative and courtroom testimony, and speeches to sympathetic communities, Holt and Moore worked tirelessly to deliver to an often-skeptical public the message that homeschooling is a good, if not a superior, way to educate American children; that it is, in a sense, a homecoming, a return to a preindustrial era, when American families worked and learned together instead of apart.

Homeschooling Becomes Mainstream

Today, the growing popularity of homeschooling is evidence that the work of Moore, Holt, and other similar-minded reformers snowballed into a grassroots revolution. Brian Ray of the National Home Education Research Institute posits that homeschooling is growing at the rate of 15 percent to 40 percent per year.[20] Conservative estimates were that the number of homeschooled children in 1985 was 50,000.[21] Patricia Lines, a researcher with the U.S. Department of Education (whose data, used for estimating the homeschooling population from the fall of 1990, were updated for the fall of 1995) estimates that the number of homeschooled children is between 500,000 and 750,000.[22]

In a working paper on home education, Lines explains how she gathered those data:

> The 1990 data came from three independent sources--state education agencies that collect data; distribution of complete, year-long graded curricular packages for homeschoolers from large suppliers; and home school associations' memberships. As each represented the tip of an iceberg, each was adjusted based on data from other sources, including surveys of homeschoolers indicating the extent to which families filed papers with the state, used particular curricular packages, or joined associations.[23]

The Home School Market, published in April 1995, estimated that the number of homeschooled children had doubled since 1990 to 800,000 and would double again in the next five years.[24] The Home School Legal Defense Association maintains that the number is already much higher--1.23 million. The estimate is based on HSLDA's analysis of the numbers provided by major curriculum distributors (such as Calvert, A Beka, and Konos), which supply complete, year-long packages to homeschoolers. HSLDA's estimate is larger than the federal government's because they have calculated

high numbers of homeschoolers for populous states, like Texas, that do not monitor or regulate homeschoolers and figured in "underground" homeschoolers who have no contact with schooling authorities or homeschool groups.[25]

A more exact count of homeschoolers is expected when the results of federal government household surveys are published. The Census Bureau, working with the National Center on Education Statistics, has begun to include questions on homeschooling.

Homeschooling families support a growing industry. For instance, Mary Pride, publisher of Practical Homeschooling magazine, distributes 100,000 copies of the publication. Pride's much-lauded The Big Book of Home Learning has sold close to a quarter million copies.[26] The HSLDA, which has 45 employees, has 53,000 families as dues-paying members.[27] Homeschooling Today, one of the newer homeschooling journals, has a circulation of about 20,000.[28] Pat Farenga of Holt Associates, the homeschooling clearinghouse named after John Holt, receives 40,000 inquiries a year.[29] Amazon.com, the online bookseller, lists 217 books about homeschooling.

Frequently Asked Questions

It will probably not come as a surprise to learn that homeschooling elicits much criticism and misunderstanding. Sometimes the critics are family members or neighbors. Large lobbying groups, such as the National School Boards Association and the National Education Association, have also made statements that suggest that homeschoolers are poorly supervised. In the summer of 1997, at the annual National Education Association convention, an anti-homeschooling resolution was adopted by the representative assembly. Resolution B-63 stated that homeschooling programs "cannot provide the student with a comprehensive education experience." Further, the resolution noted that, if homeschooling is chosen, "instruction should be by persons who are licensed by the appropriate state education licensure agency."[30]

The choice of a household to create a homeschool, even in a nation that lauds innovation, raises many uncomfortable, but important, questions about family life, community mores, children's well-being, and government regulation of private choices. What follows are the 10 most frequently asked questions about home education and home educators, questions that reveal much about the American public's assumptions about conventional methods of education.

Why Do Families Choose to Homeschool?

An analysis of 300 newspaper and magazine articles about homeschoolers revealed that the top four reasons to homeschool were dissatisfaction with the public schools, the desire to freely impart religious values, academic excellence, and the building of stronger family bonds.[31] Those reasons coincide with the findings of polls of homeschoolers. For example, the Florida Department of Education surveyed 2,245 homeschoolers in 1996. By the end of August 1996, 31 percent of that number had returned the survey. Of that group, 42 percent said that dissatisfaction with the public school environment (safety, drugs, adverse peer pressure) was their reason for establishing a home education program.[32]

What Types of Families Choose Homeschooling?

Americans of different races, socioeconomic backgrounds, and religions homeschool. Holt Associates describes its clientele as individuals who "live in the country, city, suburbs, small towns. Some are single parents, combining working outside the home with homeschooling."[33] Given many Americans' penchant for associations, there are national homeschooling support groups for Mormons, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, the handicapped, and homeschoolers of color.

A recent study of 5,402 homeschooled children from 1,657 families, conducted by Brian Ray and the HSLDA, noted that the top three occupational groups of homeschooling fathers were accountant or engineer (17.3 percent); professor, doctor, or lawyer (16.9 percent); and small-business owner (10.7 percent). According to the same survey, 87.7 percent of mothers who have chosen to stay at home and teach their children list "homemaker" as their occupation.[34]

Educational researchers Jane Van Galen and Mary Ann Pittman have categorized the two primary types of families who choose homeschooling as ideologues and pedagogues. Ideologues are typically the religious conservatives whom homeschooling attracts. Van Galen notes that ideologues want "their children to learn fundamentalist religious doctrine and a conservative political and social perspective" and establish homeschools to communicate to their offspring "that the family is the most important institution in society."[35]

Van Galen defines the pedagogues as those who teach their children themselves primarily because they dislike the professionalization and bureaucratization of modern education. They are parents who "come to their decision to home school with a broader interest in learning--they have professional training in education, they have close friends or relatives who are educators, they have read about education or child development, or they are involved with organizations that speak to the issue of childrearing."[35]

Both types of families share a common characteristic: they have enormous confidence in their ability to do a competent job of educating their children with minimal institutional support.

Are There Different Methods of Homeschooling?

Families may choose to purchase a preplanned, prepackaged curriculum from publishers that specifically target homeschoolers, such as A Beka Home School, Konos Curriculum, and Saxon Publishers. Other families may choose to enroll their children in correspondence programs, like the Calvert School of Maryland, the Christian Liberty Academy Satellite Schools of Illinois, or the Clonlara School of Michigan.

As families gain confidence in their homeschooling abilities, they may opt for a less structured approach and rely on homemade materials or borrow heavily from local libraries. Tutors may be sought to teach particular skills, such as a foreign language or a musical instrument, and older children are sometimes recruited to teach younger siblings a particular academic discipline or task. Homeschooled children also participate in field trips and learning co-ops with other homeschooled students or even take courses at a day school or community college. In Ray's study of 1,657 families, 71.1 percent of the respondents said they custom design their curriculum to suit their child's needs, and 83.7 percent said that their children use a computer in their home. The average cost is $546 per homeschooled student per year.[36]

No matter the method employed, studies indicate that one-on-one involvement with homeschooled children, especially during their primary years, is high. Theodore Wagenaar of Miami University notes that homeschooled children "are considerably more likely to experience someone in the family doing the following activities with them three or more times a week: tell a story, teach letters, teach songs, do arts and crafts, play with toys and games indoors, play games and

sports outdoors, take child on errands, and involve child in household chores."[38]

What about Socialization?
How Do Homeschooled Children Meet Others?

Those are the questions homeschoolers report they are usually asked first when they are asked to explain their lifestyle. Typically, homeschooled children engage in a variety of activities outside the home--sports teams, scouting programs, church, community service, or part-time employment. Richard G. Medlin of Stetson University notes that homeschoolers rely heavily on support groups as a resource for planning field trips and maintaining personal contact with like-minded families.[39]

In 1992 Larry Shyers of the University of Florida wrote a doctoral dissertation in which he challenged the notion that youngsters at home "lag" in social development. In his study, 8- to 10-year-old children were videotaped at play. Their behavior was observed by trained counselors who did not know which children went to regular schools and which were homeschooled.

The study found no big difference between the two groups of children in self-concept or assertiveness, which was measured by social development tests. But the videotapes showed that youngsters who were taught at home by their parents had consistently fewer behavior problems.[40]

Is Homeschooling Legal?

The U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights do not mention education. In spite of the creation of a federal Department of Education, education is an issue of states' rights. According to the National Homeschool Association, "Homeschooling is legally permitted in all fifty states, but laws and regulations are much more favorable in some states than in others."[41] For example, states such as Idaho, Oklahoma, and Texas are considered user friendly to homeschoolers in that there is no requirement for parents to initiate contact with the state to begin to homeschool. On the other hand, states such as Massachusetts, Minnesota, and New York are heavily regulated (curriculum approval by the state, home visits, submission of achievement test scores, and so on).[42]

In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, as the homeschooling movement gained more converts, the compulsory attendance laws of various states were challenged in court. One landmark case, for example, occurred in Massachusetts. In Perchemlides v. Frizzle (1978), a Massachusetts court upheld the right of the nonreligious Perchemlides family to homeschool their young son. The court concluded that "the Massachusetts compulsory attendance statue might well be constitutionally infirm if it did not exempt students whose parents prefer alternative forms of education."[43]

In response to homeschoolers' court victories at the state level, 33 states had enacted homeschooling legislation by 1995. The more favorable legal and political climate did not mean that controversies with school officials ceased.[44] Christopher Klicka, an attorney for the HSLDA, notes that, during the 1990-91 school year, nearly 2,000 homeschoolers with problems sought assistance from his organization. Those problems "involved various degrees of harassment, ranging from actual or threatened prosecution to the attempted imposition of restrictions in excess of the law."[45]

How Does a Family Begin Homeschooling?

Susan Nelson, a homeschooling consultant and curriculum developer, suggests that new homeschooling parents will find their task simpler if they decide whether their primary goal in becoming home educators is "to provide their child with useful and interesting educational experiences; or to prepare him for [formal] schooling."[46] Other advocates of homeschooling are more practical and suggest reading homeschooling literature, becoming familiar with the homeschooling laws of one's state, attending a how-to seminar, joining a regional support group, or spending time with a seasoned homeschooling family before taking the leap. Popular homeschooling advice books include How to Tutor by Samuel L. Blumenfeld, Homeschooling: Your Questions Answered! by Deborah McIntire and Robert Windham, and The Original Home Schooling Series by Charlotte Mason.[47]

After a period of trial and error, most families fall into a satisfactory routine with their homeschools. Nancy Wallace, a homeschooling mother, said about her beginning days of teaching her children: "Every morning we practice our French, play the piano, and do some writing. Every evening we read aloud to Vita and Ishmael for about 1½ hours. And in between? Ishmael takes two drama classes, a French class and a piano lesson for 1-hour periods once a

week, we go to the library, explore the woods, observe nature and read."[48]

Do Homeschooled Students Get Admitted to College?

A growing number of colleges and universities around the United States, including Harvard and Yale, are admitting homeschooled students to their freshman classes. One unusual family, the Colfaxes of Boonville, California, have had three of their four homeschooled sons accepted by Harvard. The Chronicle of Higher Education recently reported a boom in homeschooled students' winning admission to selective colleges.[49] In the absence of a transcript or high school diploma, applicants can submit samples or a portfolio of their work, letters of recommendation, and CLEP and Stanford Achievement Test scores. The HSLDA's study of 1,657 homeschooling families notes that homeschooled students want to attend college: 69 percent of respondents pursued a more formal postsecondary education.[50]

How Does the Education a Homeschooled Child Receives Compare with That of Conventionally Schooled Children?

Lines notes that "virtually all the available data show that the group of homeschooled children who are tested is above average. The pattern for children for whom data are available resembles that of children in private schools."[51] Ray notes that, regardless of income, race, gender, or parents' level of education, homeschooled children consistently score between the 82nd and 92nd percentiles on achievement tests.[52] The data from the Washington Homeschool Research Project, which has analyzed the SAT scores of homeschooled children in Washington State since 1985, demonstrated that the scores of those children were above average. Jon Wartes, writing on behalf of the project, notes that "fears that homeschooled children in Washington are at an academic disadvantage are not confirmed."[53] One significant piece of evidence of the educational progress homeschooled children are making: the National Merit Scholarship Corporation chose more than 70 homeschooled high school seniors as semifinalists in its 1998 competition.[54]

What Type of Young Adults Does Homeschooling Produce?

The homeschooling movement has produced its share of talented young adults. Barnaby Marsh, who was homeschooled in the Alaskan wilderness, went on to graduate from Cornell University and was one of 32 Rhodes Scholars selected in 1996. Fifteen-year-old country singer LeAnn Rimes skipped two grades as a result of homeschooling. Army specialist Michael New, a decorated medic who was court-martialed for refusing to don a United Nations uniform, was homeschooled. Jason Taylor, a Miami Dolphins football player, was a home-school graduate.

The movement is even old enough to have begun to establish a second generation of homeschoolers--homeschooled children who choose to homeschool their own children. Assessing the outcome of that choice remains a future task for researchers, but some information about first-generation homeschooled adults is available. J. Gary Knowles of the University of Michigan studied 53 adults to see the long-term effects of being educated at home. He summarized his findings as follows:

> I have found no evidence that these adults were even moderately disadvantaged. . . . Two thirds of them were married, the norm for adults their age, and none were unemployed or any on any form of welfare assistance. More than three quarters felt that being taught at home had actually helped them to interact with people from different levels of society.[55]

Conclusion

The modern-day homeschooling story is fundamentally one of a grassroots movement of parent educators, from Miami to Des Moines to Fairbanks, who have taught their children how to read and write at kitchen tables and in home offices. Joyce Swann of Anthony, New Mexico, is one such dedicated mother. Armed with only a high school diploma, Swann decided to homeschool her five-year-old daughter, Alexandra, by using the Calvert School's elementary school correspondence program. Ten years after that leap into the unknown, Alexandra was on the fast track to academic success. By age 16, she had earned a master's degree from California State University, and at 18 she was teaching U.S. history at El Paso Community College. Today, seven of Alexandra's nine homeschooled siblings also hold master's degrees.[56]

Stuart and Cynthia Sealfon of Brooklyn, New York, established a homeschool to allow their three children the freedom to devote as much time as they wanted to the subjects that interested them. Rebecca, the Sealfons' 13-year-old daughter, was especially interested in spelling and spent up to three hours a day studying word lists. Her dedication paid off when she became the first homeschooled child to win the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee.

Parents like Swann and the Sealfons have succeeded in making a countercultural idea acceptable. They have achieved their goals without much applause and without a dime of government funding.

This is not to imply that homeschoolers are powerless. Two years ago, homeschoolers came of age, politically, when they overwhelmed Capitol Hill switchboards in their effort to get Congress to drop a drive to force parents to get teaching certificates before they could homeschool. The House voted with home educators, 424 to 1, on that issue.

Homeschoolers have also received a great deal of positive media coverage over the past 10 years. Favorable stories about homeschoolers have been featured in the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and USA Today; the Washington Times features homeschool columnists in its Family Times section.[57] "Home-Schooled Christian Teenagers Tout Advantage of Their Lifestyle" was a Washington Post article about 900 homeschooled teenagers who attended a homeschooling youth conference in a Fairfax County, Virginia, church.[58] In 1994 the Wall Street Journal ran a series of articles about the backlash against public schools. The first article focused on homeschoolers and featured a day in the life of the Cardiffs of San Jose, California, a homeschooling family.[59] "The Dawn of Online Home Schooling" was a Newsweek article about the marriage of homeschooling and technology.[60] The American homeschooling story has even grabbed the interest of the international media. "US mother says it's not such a great sacrifice" was a sidebar in an Irish Times story about Ireland's homeschoolers.[61]

In short, homeschooling is here to stay and is giving new meaning to the old maxim "there's no place like home." It is likely that the number of homeschoolers will grow if the current public school system continues to be viewed by parents as an irrelevant institution that can hinder a child's ability to learn. The lesson for reformers bent on promoting statist educational models, such as Goals 2000 or School-to-Work, is this: homeschooling has produced literate

students with minimal government interference at a fraction of the cost of any government program.

Homeschooling families believe they are using their liberties well and wisely. The American can-do spirit is evident in the homeschools and households parents manage simultaneously. Those families, however, could use some further deregulation, be it through homeschool tax credits or a loosening of compulsory attendance school laws, to make their task easier. Indeed, policymakers of all political stripes who are anxious for some good news from the educational front lines should ponder the words of Martin Luther King III. At a homeschooling convention, King observed, "The kind of things homeschoolers are doing may be the saving grace of our nation."[62]

Notes

1. Julie Makinen, "New York Home-Schooler Is Queen of the National Spelling Bee in D.C.," Washington Post, May 30, 1997, p. A9; and Deb Riechmann, "Nerve-Wracked: Home-schooled Teen Top Speller," Daily Hampshire Gazette, May 30, 1997, p. 5.

2. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, 1996, Table 5.

3. Ibid., Table 166.

4. Alec M. Gallup and Stanley M. Elam, "The 20th Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools," Phi Delta Kappan, September 1988, p. 36.

5. Elizabeth Gleick, "The Costly Crisis in Our Schools," Time, January 30, 1995, p. 67.

6. Edward B. Fiske, Smart Schools, Smart Kids (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1991), p. 13.

7. Franklin P. Schargel, "Total Quality in Education," Quality Progress, October 1993, p. 67.

8. Cited in Sheldon Richman, Separating State and School (Fairfax, Va.: Future of Freedom Foundation, 1994), p. 111.

9. Patricia M. Lines, "Homeschooling: Private Choices and Public Obligations," U.S. Department of Education, Office of Research, 1993, p. 1.

10. Brian D. Ray, "A Profile of Home Education Research," Home School Legal Defense Association, Purcellville, Va., 1992, p. 6.

11. John Lyon, "Reclaiming the Schools: Reconciling Home and Education," The Family in America 8, no. 6 (June 1994): 3.

12. Raymond Moore, "Homegrown and Homeschooled," Mothering, Summer 1990, p. 79.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., p. 80.

15. Ibid.

16. John Holt, Teach Your Own (New York, Delacorte, 1981), p. 21.

17. John Holt, How Children Fail (New York, Pitman, 1964).

18. Holt, Teach Your Own, p. 5.

19. Ibid., p. 346.

20. Brian D. Ray, National Home Education Research Institute, 1996, at http://www.nheri.org.

21. Patricia M. Lines, "Homeschooling: An Overview for Educational Policymakers," U.S. Department of Education Working Paper, January 1997, p. 4.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. The Home School Market (Boulder, Colo.: Hal Clarke, 1995), cited in "Home Schoolers Aided by Technology," Educational Technology Markets, April 1996, p. 1.

25. Interview with Rich Shipe, Home School Legal Defense Association, May 22, 1997.

26. Interview with Mary Pride, publisher of Practical Homeschooling, February 1996.

27. Interview with Rich Shipe.

28. Interview with Christine Jensen, editorial assistant at Homeschooling Today, August 8, 1997.

29. Interview with Pat Farenga, Holt Associates, February 1996.

30. National Education Association, "B-63, Homeschooling," August 1, 1996, at http://www.nea.org/96resolu/96-toc.html.

31. Isabel Lyman, "An Analysis of Print Media Coverage of Homeschooling: 1985-1996" (Ph.D. diss., Universidad de San José, Costa Rica, 1996).

32. Office of Nonpublic Schools and Program Support, Florida Department of Education, statistical brief, 1996.

33. Quoted in "Questions and Answers about Homeschooling," John Holt's Book and Music Store Catalogue (Cambridge, Mass.: Growing without Schooling Publications, 1996), p. 34.

34. Brian D. Ray, "Home Education across the United States," Home School Legal Defense Association research study, March 1997, p. 12.

35. Jane A. Van Galen, "Ideologues and Pedagogues: Parents Who Teach Their Children at Home," in Home Schooling: Political, Historical, and Pedagogical Perspectives, ed. Jane Van Galen and Mary Anne Pittman (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1991), p. 67.

36. Ibid., p. 71.

37. Ray, "Home Education across the United States," p. 8.

38. Theodore C. Wagenaar, "What Characterizes Home Schoolers? A National Study," Education 117, no. 3 (1996): 442.

39. Richard G. Medlin, "Home Schooling: What's Hard? What Helps?" Home School Researcher 11, no. 4 (1995): 1.

40. Larry Shyers, "Comparison of Social Adjustment between Home and Traditionally Schooled Students" (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1992).

41. "Questions and Answers about Homeschooling," National Homeschool Association, Cincinnati, fact sheet, 1996.

42. Ray, "Home Education across the United States," p. 8.

43. Perchemlides v. Frizzle, no. 16641 (Massachusetts Supreme Court, November 13, 1978), p. 9.

44. See, for instance, Elsa Walsh, "Home Teaching Is Harder in Md. under New Rules," Washington Post, May 31, 1984, p. D1; William Celis, "Schooling at Home Draws Lawsuits to Doorsteps," New York Times, May 6, 1992; "Mom Will Contest Arrest for Teaching Children at Home," Grand Rapids (Michigan) Press, March 12, 1993; Deirdre M. Childress, "Who Controls Emily's Education?" Washington Post, November 25, 1995, p. F1; and Dana Hawkins, "Homeschool Battles," U.S. News & World Report, February 12, 1996.

45. Christopher J. Klicka, The Right to Home School: A Guide to the Law on Parents' Rights in Education (Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 1995), pp. 26-27.

46. Quoted in Mark Hegener and Helen Hegener, Alternatives in Education (Tonasket, Wash.: Home Education Press, 1992), p. 146.

47. Samuel L. Blumenfeld, How to Tutor (Boise: Paradigm, 1973); Deborah McIntire and Robert Windham, Homeschooling: Your Questions Answered! (Cypress, Calif.: Creative Teaching Press, 1996); and Charlotte Mason, The Original Home Schooling Series (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1993).

48. Quoted in Holt, Teach Your Own, p. 133.

49. Christopher Shea, "From Home to College," Chronicle of Higher Education, February 2, 1996, p. A31.

50. Ray, "Home Education across the United States," p. 14.

51. Patricia M. Lines, "Home Schooling," ERIC Digest, no. 95, April 1995, EDO-EA-95-3.

52. Ray, "Home Education across the United States," p. 6.

53. Quoted in Van Galen and Pitman, p. 45.

54. "Semifinalists in the 1998 Merit Scholarship Competition," National Merit Scholarship Corp., Evanston, Ill., 1997, pp. 14-92.

55. J. Gary Knowles, "Now We Are Adults: Attitudes, Beliefs, and Status of Adults Who Were Home-educated as Children," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, April 3-7, 1991.

56. Interview with Alexandra Swann, homeschool graduate, June 1997.

57. See, for instance, Nancy Wallace, "Escape! Breaking Out of the School System," Inquiry, March 29, 1982; Selwyn Feinstein, "Domestic Lessons/Shunning the Schools, More Parents Teach Their Kids at Home," Wall Street Journal, October 6, 1986, p. 1; Casey Banas, "More Parents Teaching Children Themselves," Chicago Tribune, May 29, 1989, p. 8; "Home Sweet School," Time, October 31, 1994, p. 62; John Strausbaugh, "Home's Cool," New York Press, June 7, 1995; Mary Maushard, "Parent Discontent Fuels Home Schooling," Baltimore Sun, April 25, 1996, p. 1A; and Victoria Benning, "Home-Schooling's Mass Appeal," Washington Post, January 20, 1997, p. B1.

58. Peter Y. Hong, "Home-Schooled Christian Teenagers Tout Advantage of Their Lifestyle," Washington Post, October 16, 1994, p. B1.

59. Steve Stecklow, "Live and Learn/Fed Up with Schools, More Parents Turn to Teaching at Home," Wall Street Journal, May 10, 1994, p. 1.

60. LynNell Hancock and Rob French, "The Dawn of Online Home Schooling," Newsweek, October, 10, 1994, p. 67.

61. Yvonne Healy, "At Home at School," Irish Times, April 4, 1995, p. 2.

62. Quoted in Isabel Lyman, "Martin Luther King III Encourages Homeschoolers," Moore Report International, January-February 1994, p. 5.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Published by the Cato Institute. Policy Analysis is a regular series evaluating government policies and offering proposals for reform. Nothing in Policy Analysis should be construed as necessarily reflecting the views of the Cato Institute or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before Congress.

Contact the Cato Institute for reprint permission. Additional copies of Policy Analysis are $6.00 each ($4.00 each for five or more). To order, or for a complete listing of available studies, write the Cato Institute, 1000 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001 (202-842-0200 FAX 202-842-3490).